Appendix A: Summary of Key Findings (Dr. Larry Kuznar, Indiana University–Purdue University, Fort Wayne, NSI; & MAJ Jason Spitaletta, JS/J-7 and JHU/APL166)

The bulleted list below summarizes findings relevant to the Evolution & Longevity Framework (see Section I) generated to orient all efforts in the SOCCENT ISIL effort. This broad framework represents a top-down approach to synthesizing the various contributions to this effort. The result is a supportable estimate of the current instantiation of ISIL. It is not meant to be predictive as both the organization and the environment in which it operates are dynamic (even volatile), nor is it meant to be comprehensive. In the process of assimilating the information necessary to develop the framework, a number of outstanding issues were identified. A discussion of those issues follows List 2. The author and/or affiliation is offered as a reference for each supporting or disputing piece of evidence so that a reader can trace back the source of the evidence in the document more easily.

Broad Framework Factors Used in SMA SOCCENT Effort: List 1

ISIL Capacity to Control is relatively strong and derives from strong organizational skill and fear.

• ISIL controls critical infrastructure and key resources, allowing them to offer services to the local population; ISIL has established an effective and elite leadership team, as well as an advanced organizational structure (Ligon University Of Nebraska, Omaha/START)
• ISIL effectively juxtapose messages of extreme brutality with care and provisioning, and back up at least the brutal message with action, enabling their messaging to effectively control the population (Kuznar Indiana University - Purdue University, Fort Wayne)
• If ISIL is successful in using oppressive social controls, they can force conformity without acceptance to their group (FBI Radicalization)
• ISIL has acquired strategic evolutionary force in critical areas of security and social control capability (Venturelli American University)

Local Elite Power Base (particularly in Iraq) is driven by elite desire to retain power and ISIL patronage, not by ideology

• Organizational legitimacy ISIL has garnered in the local population, with tribal elder elites, and with the broader Umma indicates that this organization should have the capacity to become a viable caliphate in the geographic regions it now controls (Ligon University Of Nebraska, Omaha/START)
• ISIL messaging appeals to local elites with grievances against Shia and others, and to religiously conservative local elites (Kuznar Indiana University - Purdue University, Fort Wayne)

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Based on their beliefs, ISIL has little broad based appeal in Iraq. Their two key Iraqi allies—Sunni Tribalists and Neo Baathists—are allies of convenience against the Government of Iraq (GoI), rather than allies of ideology. (TRADOC ATHENA)

External Support – Sunni Muslims states’ main objective is power—not ideology. Support or opposition to ISIL could change rapidly based on new developments (e.g., if a serious Shia threat emerges)

- External support will be limited and not include states (Kuznar Indiana University - Purdue University, Fort Wayne)
- The reality is that extremists tend to be the most effective in combating the Syrian regime. Hence, extremists are often the recipients of aid, much of which is channeled through the Kuwaiti financial system (JHUAPL Johns Hopkins APL Team)

Civilian Support is driven by coercion and fear, belief that ISIL offers security/ better governance, and lack of viable alternative

- ISIL effectively juxtaposes messages of extreme brutality with care and provisioning, and back up at least the brutal message with action, enabling their messaging to effectively control the population (Kuznar Indiana University - Purdue University, Fort Wayne)
- ISIL’s master narrative includes an alternative to chaos and an alternative to the modern nation-state (JHUAPL Johns Hopkins APL Team)

Ummah Support – Radicalization is a very individualized process; there are many reasons why people sympathize, support, or join ISIL. Moreover there appears to be little popular support in regional social media for ISIL as an organization or for its methods, although there is sympathy for the themes it raises including a strong belief in Western hypocrisy – a key theme in social media around the world.

- The cyber technologies facilitate internal coordination (e.g., command and control) and focuses information flow externally with the broader Umma and potential foreign fighters...“ISIL Sells Success”. The broader Umma and international support is currently estimated to be moderate-to-low...; ISIL organization is turning into a social movement, which is highly attractive to the broader Umma and local populations (Ligon University Of Nebraska, Omaha/START)
- There is relatively little popular support (0.005%, of the global Muslim population) but despite the low appeal the support in the form of foreign fighters traveling to the region is military significant (Kuznar Indiana University - Purdue University, Fort Wayne)
- Baghdadi’s charismatic authority provides sufficient credibility to a small yet psychological vulnerable percentage of Sunni males struggling with the crisis of identity versus role confusion (Spitaletta JHUAPL Johns Hopkins APL Team)
- ISIL’s hermeneutic methodology exceeds all previously known levels of interpretive power in formulating expressions of doctrinal legitimacy and categorical imperative for commission of individual and mass ritualized murder as an essential tenet of the practice of authentic Islam. (Venturelli American University)
List 2 addresses the three issues implicit in questions posted to the OSD-SMA network by SOCCENT; is ISIL magnetic (and if so, why), how broad is their popular support, and how resilient is ISIL? The list presents brief statements that lend support or dissent to the respective questions along with references to the specific chapters from which the statements were drawn. During the analytic process that produced these lists, areas of convergence were identified; they were that ISIL is indeed magnetic (although the rationale for why that may be the case is as varied as the methods employed), that the proportion of the Umma that supports ISIL is relatively low, but militarily significant, and that ISIL is a resilient organization and not simply a flash in the pan. This convergence is not to suggest unanimity in the opinions or the lack of disputing evidence; however, while there are dissenting opinions and/or research findings those holding them were unable to contribute a paper and, therefore, their positions are not suitably represented. As this project evolves, it is our hope (and intent) to ensure those positions are not only represented but also supported with empirical evidence where possible.

**Summary of Findings that Address SOCCENT Questions to OSD-SMA**

**ISIL is magnetic**

- Strategy of promoting itself as a successful organization and with a pure mission leads to a perception of organizational legitimacy, which is particularly magnetic in an environment that is rife with corruption, poor governance, and distrust of existing institutions (Ligon University Of Nebraska, Omaha/START)
- Magnetic, but only to a vanishingly small portion of the umma, but given the size of the umma and other discontented people, their magnetism is adequate to sustain the forces and support they need to achieve their goals to date; uncertain if they can garner enough support to extend their control; Themes that promise excitement, a destined, noble purpose, achievable with violence are attractive to young men cross-culturally, and ISIL messaging emphasizes these themes (Kuznar Indiana University - Purdue University, Fort Wayne)
- ISIL’s rapid success has proven to be a potent attractor (University of Virginia)
- Appeal is a function of its connectivity and brokerage the greater the audacity of ISIL actions, the more appealing players found them (Jensen Marine Corps University, Command and Staff College)
- Target audiences who perceive a consistent message and believe that ISIL has produced substantive proof on these claims may feel inclined to support ISIL and its objectives (Steckman MCIOC)
- Success has created a snowball effect in that many flock to ISIL simply due to its success to date (JHUAPL Johns Hopkins APL Team)
- Glorification of life under sharia and a celebration of the virtues of life within “the caliphate”. (Texas A&M)
- ISIL meme builds upon ... the narrative that Islamic lands, people and the religion itself is under attack from Western powers and that “defensive jihad” is therefore justified and an obligation of all Muslims (Speckhard Georgetown)
• ISIL present restoration as a solution to all the Muslims’ problems, that will unite the ummah and end discrimination based on color and nationality (Arizona State University Corman)
• Much prior research indicates that close camaraderie with a family-like group (band of brothers) ... is a key mechanism, providing a sense of invincibility and special destiny to the group and motivating willingness to make costly sacrifices, including fighting and dying (Atran ARTIS)
• The followers and recruits of ISIL have a complex set of objectives that can be partitioned into three strategic objectives: “Humanitarian Fulfillment”, “Religious Fulfillment” and “Personal Fulfillment.” (CREATE)
• ISIL targets adolescents (identity vs. role confusion) young adults (intimacy vs. isolation) and middle adulthood (generativity vs. stagnation) with the same narrative simultaneously (Spitaletta JHUAPL Johns Hopkins APL Team)
• Disputing evidence: Magnetic, but only to a vanishingly small portion of the umma, but given the size o the umma; uncertain if they can garner enough support to extend their control (Kuznar Indiana University - Purdue University, Fort Wayne)

**Portion of Umma supporting is relatively low, but militarily significant**

• The broader Umma and international support is currently estimated to be moderate-to-low; ISIL organization is turning into a social movement, which is highly attractive to the broader Umma (Ligon University Of Nebraska, Omaha/START)
• ISIL has attracted approximately 15000 Foreign Fighters, or a mere .005%, of the global Muslim population, so they are magnetic only to a minute fraction of their target population. (Kuznar Indiana University - Purdue University, Fort Wayne)
• Even if the group only appealed to 1% of the Umma for passive support, the message and corresponding appeal factor were high (Jensen Marine Corps University, Command and Staff College)
• Thus only about 15 percent of US Muslims have a favorable opinion of ISIL, whereas 73 percent have an unfavorable opinion (Bryn Mawr)
• Support for ISIL in the region was limited, yet support for Western intervention and policies was also limited (Texas A&M)
• Western volunteers for ISIL are mostly self-seeking young adults in transitional stages in their lives – immigrants, students, between jobs or girl friends, having left their native homes and looking for new families of friends and fellow travelers. For the most part they have no traditional religious education and are “born again” into a radical religious vocation through the appeal of militant jihad (Atran ARTEMIS)
• Many observers’ opinions suggest potential followers and recruits are “damaged”, “empty”, or “unfulfilled” in a very personal way (CREATE)
• ISIL seems to lack sufficient support in the ummah to build long-term political sustainability. There is no substantive agreement as to what a “caliphate” is and how it would work, both within the larger Arabic Twittersphere, and even among ISIL users (Texas A&M)

**ISIL Resiliency**
• Support for
  o ISIL should have the capacity to become a viable caliphate in the geographic regions it now controls (Ligon University Of Nebraska, Omaha/START)
  o ISIL resilient in near term (years) due to effective use of brutality, demonstrated success, ability to attract, and then indoctrinate, followers, exploit historic grievances, and craft a Salafist message that touches deep themes in Sunni Islam (Kuznar Indiana University - Purdue University, Fort Wayne)
  o The result is increasing consistency and coherence in the network of organizational relationships (UVA)
  o The networks being formed among these fighters now likely will be decisive for future terrorist attacks against Western countries, given that the networks formed during the 1980s jihad in Afghanistan were vital for the attacks committed against the West in the early to mid-2000s (Atran ARTIS)
  o ISIL is a durable movement in the geographic region it currently holds because of its rare, unique, and inimitable resources and capabilities; in an environment that is rife with corruption, poor governance, and distrust of existing institutions (Ligon University Of Nebraska, Omaha/START)
  o First, ISIL is a symptom of a larger disease: the dissolution of modern forms of governance in the Middle East in the wake of the Arab Spring and Syrian Civil War and regional sectarian competition (Jensen Marine Corps University, Command and Staff College)
  o ISIL has gained evolutionary network capabilities to reconstruct and transform the tangible and intangible ecosystem of conflict in the Middle East (Venturelli American University)
  o ISIL has evolved powerful resilient traits from a wide range of innovations whose combined effects are not additive but instead enhanced through nonlinear interactions, thereby resulting in robustness in systems growth, and fluidity of responsive and anticipatory mechanisms; ISIL’s leaders and its membership demonstrate a cogent recognition that stasis presents a greater existential threat than any powerful military assault… it must maintain a specific bandwidth of operational tempo to generate the force and energy that allows extensions in functional capabilities… (Venturelli American University)

• Argument against
  o One of ISIL’s greatest strengths is also one of its vulnerabilities since it has developed a systems bias for those precise resilient traits that are uniquely resistant to stasis (Venturelli American University)

Finally, List 3 summarizes findings relevant to key issues that emerged in the working group’s discussions concerning ISIL. In fusing findings from an interdisciplinary multi-method research effort, it is important to not only identify what the research reveals but also what remains unknown as well as what was not (but should be) asked. As identified earlier, it is OSD-SMA’s intent to keep the network that contributed to this effort intact and engaged with this topic to the greatest degree possible. As the effort evolves, we
intend to address the below issues that arose during the various workshops. These questions, which remain largely unanswered, could be considered both recommendations for future research by the OSD-SMA network and/or priority intelligence requirements for SOCCENT.

**Summary List of Emerging Issues & Key Issues Raised During SOCCENT ISIL Workshops**

**ISIL is strictly an organization only vs. a broader movement.**

- Disputing evidence
  - ISIL should have the capacity to become a viable caliphate in the geographic regions it now controls (Ligon University Of Nebraska, Omaha / START)
  - ISIL rhetoric speaks to a broader movement to establish a Caliphate and regain lost Sunni glory (Kuznar Indiana University - Purdue University, Fort Wayne)
  - Globally, it has effectively tapped into the deep well on the Sunni ‘Umma (Jensen Marine Corps University, Command and Staff College)
  - Dabiq placed more emphasis on the nation-brand identity, the sociocultural aspects of Iraq and Syria (Steckman MCIOC)
  - Based on these observations and analysis, the study predicts that while ISIL itself may eventually be destroyed, the idea of ISIL as a carrier of the moral imperative will remain alive in the Muslim collective conscience and thus inspire even more radical Koranic or doctrinal hermeneutics and ideological innovation to move manpower, resources and inspire jihadist operations. (Venturelli American University)

**ISIL Income is adequate to sustain their polity**

- ISIL controls critical infrastructure and key resources, which allow them to offer services to the local population; ISIL has established an effective and elite leadership team, as well as an advanced organizational structure (Ligon University Of Nebraska, Omaha/START)
- Even if ISIL income is limited, if local populations cannot organize, ISIL can rule through brutality; consider 1990s Taliban, current Somalia, Anbar under AQI and Zarqawi (Kuznar opinion)

**ISIL message is based on timeless themes that appeal cross-culturally to young males (hypothesis A)**

- ISIL’s strategy of promoting itself as a successful organization and with a pure mission (ideological superiority) leads to a perception of organizational legitimacy (Ligon University Of Nebraska, Omaha/START)
- ISIL messaging emphasizes themes that promise excitement, a destined, noble purpose, achievable with violence are attractive to young men cross-culturally (Kuznar Indiana University - Purdue University, Fort Wayne)
- The greater the audacity of ISIL actions, the more appealing players found them. There was something to spectacle (Jensen Marine Corps University, Command and Staff College)
- Women celebrated the ability to live in purity, and sympathizers celebrated ISIL brutality and conquest in the present and future (Texas A&M)
• The followers and recruits of ISIL have a complex set of objectives that can be partitioned into three strategic objectives: “Humanitarian Fulfillment”, “Religious Fulfillment” and “Personal Fulfillment.” ISIL’s key means objectives are “Generate Revenue” and “Kill, Frighten, and Convert Infidels (CREATE)

ISIL message is primarily a religious one (hypothesis B)

• Support for
  o People with only a superficial understanding of Salafism can easily be attracted by more timeless themes; ISIL then, however, is in a position to indoctrinate; they attempt “moral outbidding” by taking a more extreme, higher moral road in their rhetoric (Kuznar Indiana University - Purdue University, Fort Wayne)
  o Globally, ISIL has effectively tapped into the deep well on the Sunni ‘Umma (Jensen Marine Corps University, Command and Staff College)
  o ISIL’s rhetoric shows that it is shaping its identity and crafting a new narrative based on this pre-modern history and its own interpretation of Islam (Steckman MCIOC)
  o The ISIL meme builds on already existing and accepted Islamic dogma that most Muslims treasure (Speckhard Georgetown)

• Evidence against
  o By targeting the fundamental ontological and epistemological layers of being, belief, identity, community, order, collective will, and doctrinal reasoning on validity, authority and legitimacy, ISIL has gained what no other jihadist organization, including Al Qaeda, has yet been able to achieve in categories of network-formation, high-quality human capital and skills, tactical victories, and the production of new forms of order and strategic realignments (Venturelli American University)

Is the religious message actually understood and internalized by recruits? If not, why do they join?

• People with only a superficial understanding of Salafism can easily be attracted by more timeless themes; ISIL then, however, is in a position to indoctrinate (Kuznar Indiana University - Purdue University, Fort Wayne)

• ISIL has successfully married Arab Sunni [trans]-nationalism to militant Islamism while also retaining, on the surface at least, a wide international, inter-ethnic Sunni appeal (Jensen Marine Corps University, Command and Staff College)

• ISIL’s master narrative. These include victimization, the plight of Iraqi Sunnis, the Sunni-Shia divide (and broader regional proxy war), an alternative to chaos and an alternative to the modern nation-state (JHUAPL Johns Hopkins APL Team)

• Muslims are far more contagious than non-Muslims to the ISIL meme, as they are taught from a young age to feel a responsibility for their “fictive kin” –The meme can also infect any lost person who is experiencing a cognitive opening to new ideas, (i.e. experiencing a trauma, looking for a purpose or seeking religious conversion to Islam (Speckhard Georgetown)
• In the end the foreign fighters who come mainly for adventure with their friends, whether to save Syria or secure the Caliphate, as well as local fighters who join for material advantage or to assuage hate, have radicalized together in combat into a formidable fighting force (Atran ARTIS)
• ISIL’s hermeneutic methodology exceeds all previously known levels of interpretive power in formulating expressions of doctrinal legitimacy and categorical imperative for commission of individual and mass ritualized murder as an essential tenet of the practice of authentic Islam (Venturelli American University)

Are hypotheses A and B mutually exclusive?
• No (Kuznar Indiana University - Purdue University, Fort Wayne)
• No (Jensen Marine Corps University, Command and Staff College)
• No (Texas A&M)
• No (Atran ARTIS)

People will exist in a minimally functioning, impoverished state w/o rising against their oppressive state
• If local populations cannot organize, ISIL can rule through brutality; consider 1990s Taliban, current Somalia, Anbar under AQI and Zarqawi (Kuznar opinion)

Worldviews can be changed through communication and counter-messaging
• Support for
  o This is a brittle ideological system that can be pressured by deconstructing the imagined community, challenging strategic ambiguity, and de-romanticizing the history of the Caliphate (Arizona State University Corman)
  o Having the message come from the Arab world with Arab voices as messengers is equally necessary (FBI Radicalization)
  o ISIL’s appeal and influence with potential foreign fighters and female supporters can be countered by police and the military through coordinated development and exchange of information (FBI Policing)
• Argument against
  o Worldviews are extremely difficult to change. ISIL and other extremist groups are able to “change” worldviews in those who are vulnerable; this tends to include those who are disassociated from their own society or those who already have embraced violent Salafism (Kuznar Indiana University - Purdue University, Fort Wayne)
  o “The Coalition’s message will always sound lame and like an anti-drug ad.” Another player observed that “the Coalition cannot counter deep-seated alienation and frustration in target global Muslim youth population in the short-term (1-3 year horizon); it is just too deep-seated.” (Jensen Marine Corps University, Command and Staff College)
Neither are appeals to “moderate Islam” likely to work inasmuch as the call to adventure and glory is critical to mobilizing the younger generations to make costly sacrifices for or against ISIL (Atran ARTIS)

This “Criminally Active” group represents approximately 10% of the 3000-person sample [of Jihadist supporters]. This group included foreign fighters who are actively fighting with either ISIS or JN, individuals who are actively supporting the group (fundraising, propaganda, recruitment), or those espousing specific threats towards western countries (Weyers & Cole London University) ISIL is a product of its environment; difficult to replicate this organization.

**ISIL is a product of its environment; difficult to replicate this organization**

- **Support for**
  - ISIL is a durable movement in the geographic region it currently holds because of its rare, unique, and inimitable resources and capabilities; in an environment that is rife with corruption, poor governance, and distrust of existing institutions (Ligon University Of Nebraska, Omaha/START)
  - First, ISIL is a symptom of a larger disease: the dissolution of modern forms of governance in the Middle East in the wake of the Arab Spring and Syrian Civil War and regional sectarian competition (Jensen Marine Corps University, Command and Staff College)
  - This study concluded that ISIL’s ascent was the result of a confluence of favorable conditions – a perfect storm (JHUAPL Johns Hopkins APL Team)

- **Argument against**
  - ISIL has created momentum through a ‘moral imperative’ in the region and beyond, forging, perhaps for the first time, a collective consciousness within the Islamic public sphere, which itself comprises a powerful dimension of the Global Information Commons. This will strengthen its legitimacy, recruitment of high-quality human capital, and a growing support base in Muslim communities. Other networks have been far less proficient in creating ‘moral-exegesis’ on the playing field of the Islamic public sphere (Venturelli American University)